

A RADIO DESPATCHING SYSTEM FOR THE EAST SUFFOLK LINE

The report argues that British Rail must reduce investment and annual costs for operating the BR network in order to remain competitive. A source of concern has been the lightly used rural lines, which although vital to the network as a whole, as feeders to the main lines, nevertheless prove a heavy drain on resources in relation to the revenue they directly earn. This report aims to show how radio despatching, when judiciously applied, can significantly reduce signalling costs on lightly used lines.

A simple radio despatching system is proposed for the double track East Suffolk Line (Ipswich – Lowestoft). Trains will carry transportable VHF mobile radio equipments, enabling them to communicate with a central despatch centre at Saxmundham. Reflective lineside notice boards will replace all signals (except those retained for protecting level crossings, which will be worked by the crossing keepers). The radio controlled despatching system will interface by radio with fringe signal boxes at Westerfield Junction and Oulton Broad Swing Bridge and to all the manually operated level crossings along the line. A maximum of four fixed stations (transmitters/receivers) will be necessary to obtain the required radio coverage and a special data system will use the same radio channel for communication with the manned level crossings along the line. At each level crossing, radio equipment will be fitted with a data decoder, which will indicate “train coming” to the crossing keeper. Two automatic level crossings are included in the scheme and it is envisaged that further automatic crossings can be incorporated when eventual conversion of the crossings takes place. Train regulation will be achieved by the use of special charts maintained by the despatcher, and by a despatcher’s line occupation panel, which will automatically cause the necessary warnings to be given to the level crossing keepers.

The report describes the capitol costs required for the installation, the savings in capitol costs of renewing existing equipment and savings in revenue costs..